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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-eighth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

(*Item 3 (c)*)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations from the programme evaluation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

1. At its 8th meeting, on 7 June 2018, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the triennial review of the implementation of recommendations from the programme evaluation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (E/AC.51/2018/4).

2. The Assistant Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report and, together with representatives of UNCTAD, responded to questions raised during its consideration by the Committee.

Discussion

3. Delegations recognized and appreciated the efforts of UNCTAD in fully implementing five recommendations (recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7) and partially implementing two (recommendations 3 and 6).

4. Delegations welcomed the quality of the work conducted by UNCTAD and emphasized the role of UNCTAD in encouraging intergovernmental dialogue, aid for trade and promoting economic development. In that regard, delegations highlighted the particular importance of paying attention to the least developed countries, middle-income countries and countries with economies in transition and their integration into

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the global economy. UNCTAD was encouraged to continue to improve its work in that regard and to contribute its specialized expertise in trade and development unavailable elsewhere in the development pillar.

5. It was stressed that a strong research and analysis function was essential to the contributions of UNCTAD towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and appreciation was expressed for the publications of UNCTAD, including its flagship reports, the *Trade and Development Report* and the *World Investment Report*. A delegation remarked that, in its recent role as Chair of the Trade and Development Board, it could attest to the efficiency and effectiveness of the research and analysis function of UNCTAD.

6. A delegation stressed the need for UNCTAD to be provided with the appropriate budgetary and political support. Another delegation echoed that comment and expressed concern at the decreasing funds allotted to assistance for trade and highlighted its importance for a number of countries. A delegation called for a balance between donor countries and partner countries when it came to earmarked contributions.

7. As regards recommendation 1, on strengthening results-based management within UNCTAD, a delegation expressed the view that, while the recommendation was considered implemented, there was still room for improvement, in particular with regard to integrating results-based management into the research pillar. While the delegation acknowledged that it might be difficult to apply the results-based management mindset to research, it stressed that UNCTAD should nevertheless be encouraged to do more in that respect, particularly as it constituted a way to more effectively connect research activities to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

8. A number of delegations expressed concern at the delay in the implementation of recommendation 3, on developing and implementing quality assurance frameworks in all divisions, and sought clarification on the reason for the delay. Concern was expressed that the lack of statistical oversight and quality assurance had resulted in a discrepancy in data, whereby erroneously interpreted data had been included in the UNCTAD report "Trade misinvoicing in primary commodities in developing countries: the cases of Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia" issued in July 2016, and it was stressed that the framework should be adopted as a matter of priority to ensure consistent and correct standards across the system and to avoid a repeat of that error. Information was also sought on the status of the United Nations Statistics Quality Assurance Framework, which, according to information available at the time of issuance of the OIOS report, had been expected to be approved in March 2018. In that regard, information was sought as to whether the delay in its adoption was due to a delay on the part of UNCTAD.

9. Several delegations emphasized the importance of mainstreaming gender considerations into issues of trade and development and therefore urged UNCTAD to continue its efforts to fully implement recommendation 6, on increasing gender mainstreaming in research and analysis products. A delegation highlighted the ongoing work of UNCTAD in gender mainstreaming through the development of a trade and gender toolkit, which was expected to help in providing technical support in that area. A delegation referred to the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment, adopted in Buenos Aires in December 2017, by which, for the first time in the history of the World Trade Organization, its members and observers endorsed a collective initiative to increase the participation of women in trade.

10. A delegation recalled that the Committee, at its fifty-fifth session, in 2015, had recalled that the work of UNCTAD was based on three pillars, namely consensus

building, research and analysis, and technical assistance, and that two of those, namely consensus building and technical assistance, had not been evaluated. In that context, the Committee had recommended that OIOS address the remaining pillars in the next evaluation report. The importance of technical assistance was echoed by another delegation, which emphasized the need for technical cooperation in the areas of investment policy, competition and international trade policy.

Conclusions and recommendations

11. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly take note of the report of OIOS on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee on the programme evaluation of UNCTAD.**

12. **The Committee noted with appreciation the implementation of five of the recommendations made in the programme evaluation of UNCTAD and recommended that the General Assembly encourage UNCTAD to continue to strengthen its institutional orientation to results-based management in the research and analysis pillar.**

13. **The Committee underlined the importance of mainstreaming a gender perspective within its research and analysis products.**

14. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly encourage UNCTAD to further implement a statistics quality assurance framework in order to improve statistical oversight and quality assurance.**

15. **The Committee recalled that the work of UNCTAD was based on three pillars, namely consensus building, research and analysis, and technical assistance, two of which, namely consensus building and technical assistance, had not been evaluated in the OIOS report. In that context, the Committee noted the importance of all three pillars and emphasized that the importance of technical assistance and consensus building for the fulfilment of the UNCTAD mandate should be recognized.**